

Skillsfirst Awards

Handbook

Functional Skills English Level 1 & 2

FSE01

FSE02



Skillsfirst
growth through learning

Qualification numbers:

Skillsfirst qualification number	Qualification title	QAN number
FSE01	Skillsfirst Functional Skills qualification in English at level 1	501/1497/9
FSE02	Skillsfirst Functional Skills qualification in English at level 2	501/1498/0



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1. About Skillsfirst

Skillsfirst Awards is an awarding organisation committed to designing, developing and certificating a diverse range of nationally recognised qualifications.

With over 75 years of collective experience in the adult education sector, Skillsfirst's passionate and talented team have an in-depth understanding of the world of work-based learning. We use this knowledge every day to deliver simple, seamless service with the learner at its heart.

We are exceptionally proud to say that more than 400k learners in the UK have achieved a Skillsfirst qualification since the company first launched in 2010.

For further information please contact Skillsfirst customer services +44(0)121 270 5100 or visit www.skillsfirst.co.uk

1.1 Skillsfirst centre recognition and qualification approval

Centres wishing to offer Functional Skills must comply with both this qualification handbook and the Skillsfirst qualification approval criteria as specified in our Centre Handbook.

If you are an existing Skillsfirst centre and want to add Functional Skills to your approved qualifications, please complete and submit a qualification application form in QMIS.

If you are not an existing Skillsfirst centre and wish to register your interest in becoming a recognised centre, please call us on 0121 270 5100. A member of our business development team will be happy to guide you through the centre recognition process.

If you require any support, please contact the Skillsfirst customer services team who will be delighted to support you on 0121 270 5100 or customerservices@skillsfirst.co.uk

2. Introduction to Functional Skills

2.1 What are Functional Skills?

Functional Skills have been developed as part of a government initiative to improve the levels of literacy, numeracy and ICT in the UK. The qualifications have been designed to assess skills that can be applied to a learner's life, learning and work.

Skillsfirst Awards currently offers Functional Skills at levels 1 and 2, with flexible, onscreen testing opportunities for all subjects.

2.2 Who is this qualification for?

Functional Skills underpin nearly all forms of 14+ learning in England and are intended for a vast range of different settings.

There are specific rules around the achievement of Functional Skills within Apprenticeship frameworks, as well as an expectation that Foundation Learning and other programmes (eg GCE/GCSE) should include opportunities to develop and achieve appropriate Functional Skills qualifications.

2.3 What does the English Functional Skill qualification cover?

Competence in Functional Skills English it is broadly about being able to show competence:

In speaking, listening and communication by:

- taking part in discussions and allow for and respond to input from others
- preparing for and contributing with ideas and opinions
- adapting contributions to suit the audience
- presenting information /ideas clearly using appropriate language

In reading by:

- selecting/reading and understanding/comparing texts

In writing by:

- writing a range of texts
- presenting information clearly and in a logical sequence
- using correct grammar
- using correct spelling and punctuation

3 Qualification Structures

These qualifications can be obtained by the learner completing the single mandatory unit.

Skillsfirst Functional Skills Qualification in English at Level 1 – FSE01

Mandatory components: The learner is required to complete one mandatory unit which is made up of the following three components:

Unit title	Guided learning hours
English Writing Level 1	15
English Reading Level 1	15
Speaking, Listening and Communication Level 1	15

Skillsfirst Functional Skills Qualification in English at Level 2 – FSE02

Mandatory components: The learner is required to complete one mandatory unit which is made up of the following three components:

Unit title	Guided learning hours
English Writing Level 2	15
English Reading Level 2	15
Speaking, Listening and Communication Level 2	15

All three of these assessment components are externally-set. The reading and writing components are also externally marked, whilst the speaking, listening and communication component is internally assessed.

When a registered learner has achieved the speaking, listening and communication component, centres need to submit the result within REG, using the appropriate Skillsfirst unit number (level 1 - SLC1; level 2 – SLC2). Results are subject to external verification (including observation) by Skillsfirst.

The achievement of each component is reported positively on the qualification certificate.

4 Qualification Details

4.1 Standards for the English Level 1 components with assessment weightings:

Reading

Skill standard	Coverage and range	Assessment weighting
Read and understand a range of straightforward texts.	Identify the main points and ideas and how they are presented in a variety of texts. Read and understand texts in detail. Utilise information contained in texts. Identify suitable responses to texts.	Equal weighting across all the coverage and range.

Writing

Skill standard	Coverage and range	Assessment weighting
Write a range of texts to communicate information, ideas and opinions, using formats and styles suitable for their purpose and audience.	Write clearly and coherently, including an appropriate level of detail. Present information in a logical sequence. Use language, format and structure suitable for purpose and audience.	55-60%
	Use correct grammar, including correct and consistent use of tense. Ensure written work includes generally accurate punctuation and spelling and that meaning is clear.	40-45%

Speaking, Listening and Communication

Skill standard	Coverage and range	Assessment weighting
Take part fully in formal and informal discussions and exchanges that include unfamiliar subjects.	Make relevant and extended contributions to discussions, allowing for and responding to others' input. Prepare for and contribute to the formal discussion of ideas and opinions. Make different kinds of contributions to discussions. Present information / points of view clearly and in appropriate language.	Equal weighting across all the coverage and range.

IMPORTANT NOTE: Centres **must** ensure that all staff involved in the assessment of the Speaking, Listening and Communication have accessed, used and be conversant with the content of the Skillsfirst DVD training guide before carrying out any assessments.

To access a copy of this DVD, please contact Skillsfirst on 0121 270 5100.

4.2 Standards for the English Level 2 components with assessment weightings:

Reading

Skill standard	Coverage and range	Assessment weighting
Select, read, understand and compare texts and use them to gather information, ideas, arguments and opinions	<p>Select and use different types of texts to obtain and utilise relevant information.</p> <p>Read and summarise, succinctly, information / ideas from different sources</p> <p>Identify the purposes of texts and comment on how meaning is conveyed.</p> <p>Detect point of view, implicit meaning and / or bias.</p> <p>Analyse texts in relation to audience needs and consider suitable responses.</p>	Equal weighting across all the coverage and range.

Writing

Skill standard	Coverage and range	Assessment weighting
Write a range of texts, including extended written documents, communicating information, ideas and opinions effectively and persuasively	<p>Present information / ideas concisely, logically and persuasively.</p> <p>Present information on complex subjects clearly and concisely.</p> <p>Use a range of writing styles for different purposes.</p> <p>Use a range of sentence structures, including complex sentences, and paragraphs to organise written communication effectively.</p>	55-60%
	<p>Punctuate written text using commas, apostrophes and inverted commas accurately.</p> <p>Ensure written work is fit for purpose and audience, with accurate spelling and grammar that support clear meaning in a range of text types.</p>	40-45%

Speaking, Listening and Communication

Skill standard	Coverage and range	Assessment weighting
Make a range of contributions to discussions in a range of contexts, including those that are unfamiliar and make effective presentations.	Consider complex information and give a relevant, cogent response in appropriate language Present information and ideas clearly and persuasively to others. Adapt contributions and ideas clearly and persuasively to others. Make significant contributions to discussions taking a range of roles and helping to move discussion forward.	Equal weighting across all the coverage and range.

IMPORTANT NOTE: Centres **must** ensure that all staff involved in the assessment of the Speaking, Listening and Communication have accessed, used and be conversant with the content of the Skillsfirst DVD training guide before carrying out any assessments.

To access a copy of this DVD, please contact Skillsfirst on 0121 270 5100.

4.3 Assessment of Speaking, Listening and Communication at Level 1 and Level 2

The assessment for Speaking, Listening and Communication is externally set/guided and internally marked by the centre. Skillsfirst provides externally set tasks along with guidance to centres on ways in which these may be adapted and also guidance for centres who may wish to develop their own tasks.

Each assessment task provided by Skillsfirst will:

- provide realistic contexts and scenarios
- specify sub-tasks that are relevant to the context and meaningful
- require application of knowledge, skills and understanding for a purpose
- assess process skills and the outcome of their application in different contexts

Any amendment of set tasks, or production of alternative tasks by centres, must be in line with the setting specifications within this document and sent to Skillsfirst at least eight weeks before assessment is due to take place for approval by the Functional Skills Senior Examiner. Further details can be found in the Skillsfirst handbook entitled “Guidance on setting centre devised SLC assessment tasks” which can be obtained by contacting Skillsfirst on 0121 270 5100 or at customerservices@skillsfirst.co.uk

There is a standard mark scheme for the assessment of Speaking Listening and Communication Level 1 and Level 2 assessment components which has been produced by Skillsfirst and should always be used. This clearly states how marks are allocated to the different levels of performance that learners will demonstrate. The mark scheme does not prescribe the content of learners’ responses and can therefore easily be applied to the Skillsfirst set assessment tasks and to any centre devised tasks.

Skillsfirst externally set tasks along with guidance to centres can be found in the Skillsfirst handbooks entitled “SLC Level 1 Assessment Tasks and Assessment Documentation” and “SLC Level 2 Assessment Tasks and Assessment Documentation”. These can be obtained by contacting Skillsfirst on 0121 270 5100 or at customerservices@skillsfirst.co.uk

Speaking, Listening and Communication within Functional Skills qualifications are defined as non-written communication, normally conducted face-to-face.

In exceptional circumstances, assessment may take place remotely, provided that the medium through which remote assessment takes place meets the requirements specified in the “General Conditions of Recognition – September 2015” (Ofqual/15/5772) – G6 Arrangements for Reasonable Adjustments. Condition G6.1 states:

“For the purposes of this condition, Reasonable Adjustments are adjustments made to an assessment for a qualification so as to enable a disabled learner to demonstrate his or her knowledge, skills and understanding to the levels of attainment required by the specification for that qualification”

The term 'Speaking, Listening and Communication' as used in the standard for this level is intended to be interpreted in a broadly inclusive way and is not intended to create any unnecessary barriers to learners with speech or hearing impairment.

The needs of individual learners will vary, but as guidance, the term should be interpreted as meaning communication, discussion and presentation that:

- can include use of sign language (e.g. British Sign Language, sign-supported English) provided this is made accessible to all participants in the discussion. (It is recognised that BSL is a language in its own right and not a form of English. BSL is, however, permitted as an alternative to English for the assessment of speaking, listening and communication, where BSL is the learner's normal way of communicating in the contexts described by the standards). No other languages are permitted as alternatives to English;
- can include access to augmentative speech equipment and such software as constitutes the learner's normal way of working;
- does not depend solely on the use of written language, or require the individual/s with whom the learner is communicating to be able to read (as these skills are covered by the requirements for reading and writing).

5 Delivering Functional Skills

The time taken to complete the Functional Skills qualifications will vary significantly between learners – dependent upon their previous experience, interests and their exposure to work related activities. Programmes of learning should take factors such as this into account.

During the delivery, it is important to maximise the association with real life situations as the assessments will be based on real life scenarios.

To effectively delivery Functional Skills, centres must ensure that the appropriate teaching, administrative and physical resources are in place.

5.1 Teaching staff

Teaching staff must:

- Have 2 years' experience in teaching/training
- Or**
- Are working towards an appropriate teaching/training qualification (Cert Ed or Learning & Development trainer units)
- Or**

- Hold an appropriate teaching/training qualification (Cert Ed or Learning & Development trainer units)
- Have knowledge and experience in the subject being taught to be able to judge the learner's performance against the Functional Skills Standards and to be able to justify their teaching practices
- As a minimum hold the same level of the qualification being taught – but preferably hold a higher level.

Assessors and Internal Verifiers of the Speaking, Listening and Communication element of Functional Skills English must:

- Have an understanding of the assessment or verification process.
- Have verifiable relevant experience and current knowledge of the occupational working area at, or above, the level they are assessing or verifying. This experience and knowledge must be of sufficient depth to be effective and reliable when judging learner competence or verifying assessment processes and decisions.

5.2 Learners

There are no formal entry requirements for this qualification. However, centres will need to make an initial assessment of each learner prior to the start of their programme to ensure they are working towards relevant Functional Skills qualifications at the appropriate level.

5.3 Registering learners

In order to enter learners for any of the Functional Skills examinations, centre staff should first register learners with Skillsfirst through our secure online portal **REG (Registration/Certification Electronic Gateway)**.

If you don't have a username and password for this portal, please contact Skillsfirst on 0121 270 5100 or email customerservices@skillsfirst.co.uk

5.4 Entering learners for the Speaking, Listening and Communication component

As long as the learner is registered for the English qualification, they can sit the assessment when they are ready. This component is internally assessed using Skillsfirst example material or centre-produced material that has been approved by Skillsfirst.

Skillsfirst Awards have designed Functional Skills English Level 1 and 2 Speaking, Listening and Communication assessment tasks to meet the requirements of the Functional Skills English Skills standard. These assessment tasks are available from the Skillsfirst customer services team; please email secureassess@skillsfirst.co.uk to obtain copies.

Centres who do not wish to use these assessment tasks, or who wish to tailor tasks for specific industries or client groups, may produce their own. However, centre devised tasks must be approved by the Skillsfirst Senior Examiner before use and should meet the setting specification which can be found within the Guidance on Setting Centre Devised SLC Assessment Tasks. A copy of this can be obtained from secureassess@skillsfirst.co.uk

Amended and / or new tasks, along with a completed setting matrix, should be sent to Skillsfirst for review at least six weeks before assessment is due to take place. Only if your amendments / new tasks meet the requirements will approval be given. If approval is not received by the time the assessment takes place, centres should use one of the Skillsfirst approved tasks. This also applies if the centre wishes to adapt any of the set assessment tasks.

When a registered learner has achieved this component, centres need to submit the result within REG, using the appropriate Skillsfirst unit code (level 1 - SLC1; level 2 – SLC2). Results are subject to external verification (including observation) by Skillsfirst.

Centres **must** ensure that all staff involved in the assessment of the Speaking, Listening and Communication have accessed, used and be conversant with the content of the Skillsfirst DVD training guide before carrying out any assessments.

5.5 Scheduling reading and writing Functional Skills exam

When taken onscreen, Functional Skills Reading and Writing exams can be taken at any time (on-demand). For details on how to schedule and manage onscreen exams please refer to the [SecureAssess/Secure Client Functional Skills User Guide](#)

Marking of papers takes place in frequent windows. For information on marking windows and result release dates refer to the [Functional Skills Exam Delivery Calendar](#), available on our website.

5.6 Preparing learners for the Functional Skills reading and writing exam

A free onscreen practice test will be made available to centres. This can be used by staff and learners to familiarise themselves with the onscreen system functionality. This is available on our website.

In addition, there are tutorial videos also available on our website.

5.7 Conduct of Functional Skills exams

Functional Skills examinations must be taken under supervised conditions, that is:

- learners must be continually supervised by a reliable person
- all necessary facilities must be available to learners
- any time restrictions must be complied with
- learners work must be independent and unaided

Centres must ensure staff invigilating Functional Skills exams are familiar with Skillsfirst's Instructions for Conducting Exams.

5.8 Pass marks

At both levels 1 and 2, for Reading and Writing it is anticipated that the pass mark is set at 60% of available marks and that should continue to reflect minimal competence at this level. However this will be confirmed or amended through the awarding process. The marks required to pass may be achieved over the coverage and range as a whole. There is no requirement to achieve 60% of available marks within each component of the coverage and range in order to achieve a pass overall.

Note: In 'writing' at both Level 1 and Level 2, between 40% and 45% of the available marks will be allocated specifically to spelling, punctuation and grammar.

At both levels 1 and 2 for Speaking, Listening and Communication, the pass mark is set at approximately 75% of available marks as this best describes minimum competence. The 75% of available marks may be achieved over the coverage and range as a whole, subject to a minimum mark being obtained for each task and each component. There is no requirement to achieve 75% of available marks within each component of the coverage and range in order to achieve a pass overall.

5.9 Learner certification process

Functional Skills are 'pass' or 'fail' qualifications, they are not graded. They are also free standing qualifications so each subject will be certificated separately. Certificates are titled by skill and level achieved.

In the case of Functional Skills English, Skillsfirst will automatically dispatch a learner's certificate when they have achieved the required pass mark in their examinations and the Speaking, Listening and Communication component has been claimed by the centre.

Attainment table points for Functional Skills qualifications are as follows:

- **Level 1 = 12.5 points** (equivalent to Skills for Life (adult literacy and numeracy at Level 1; Key Skills at Level 1; GCSE at grades D – G and NVQ Level 1).
- **Level 2 = 23 points** (equivalent to Skills for Life (adult literacy and numeracy at Level 2; Key Skills at Level 2; GCSE at grades A* - C and NVQ Level 2)

The points for Levels 1 and 2 are in addition to points allocated for other qualifications such as GCSEs.

5.10 Re-sits

There are no limits on the number of times a learner may re-sit a Functional Skills exam, however a learner must wait at least 14 days from the date of the last exam (or the date uploaded for onscreen exams).

Skillsfirst strongly recommend that a learner receives proper tuition and preparation before any re-sit.

Please note there is a charge for each re-sit, please contact the Skillsfirst customer services team to confirm the current cost.

5.11 Access to Functional Skills English

In line with the guidance provided by the Ofqual inclusion sheets for Functional Skills, learners can have access to all forms of equipment, software and assistance that constitute their normal way of working.

However, these **must not** affect the reliability or validity of assessment outcomes or give the learner an assessment advantage over other learners undertaking the same or similar assessments.

The Functional Skills qualifications criteria require awarding organisations to develop assessment materials that anticipate the needs of learners with disabilities and which minimise, as far as possible, the need to make reasonable adjustments or exemptions whilst still assessing the skills standards.

Learners may be permitted access to any of the following when undertaking Functional Skills English assessments:

- Dictionary (non-electronic)
- Readers (for writing and SLC only)
- Scribes (for reading and SLC only)
- Practical assistants
- Transcripts
- BSL interpreters
- Oral language modifiers
- Modified question papers (including Braille)
- Extra time
- Models, visual/tactile aids, speaking scales

For further information relating to Functional Skills access arrangements, please refer to Ofqual's Functional Skills Criteria for English – September 2011.

Exemptions – please note

Disability Discrimination legislation (now incorporated into the Equality Act 2010) permits the granting of exemptions for specific assessment components within qualifications in certain circumstances.

Functional Skills qualifications and assessments have been designed to be inclusive and to minimise any later need to make reasonable adjustments or exemptions.

For full details see the Skillsfirst Reasonable Adjustment and Special Consideration policy available on the Skillsfirst website.

5.12 Centre malpractice & maladministration guidance

Malpractice and maladministration is outlined in the Skillsfirst Malpractice & Maladministration policy available on the Skillsfirst website

5.13 Appeals procedure

The Appeals procedure is outlined in the Skillsfirst Appeals Policy available on the Skillsfirst website.

6 Further support

The following material is available for this qualification:

- Functional Skills English practice papers which can be found on the Skillsfirst website
- Senior Examiner reports which provide feedback on areas of weakness that learners have demonstrated in recent examinations as a means of supporting both our customers and our learners
- Functional Skills Initial Assessment in partnership with Hodder Education. To access the free initial assessments, please contact Barry Seddon, Functional Skills Consultant for Hodder Education by email: barry.seddon@hoddereducation.co.uk

7.0 Summary of the English Functional Skill qualifications

Subject	Level	Total Number of Tasks	Total Length of Papers	Type of Paper	Open/Closed Mix	Divided into Sections?	Total Number of Marks	Comments
English						YES – as below		
SLC*	1	3	3×10min	Externally set - Internally marked	100% Open		60	SLC* is 3 x 10min sessions within a 1 hour period with a minimum of 3 and maximum of 5 learners
Reading	1	3 Reading Texts	45 mins	Externally Set and Marked	>50% Open		30	
Writing	1	2	45 mins	Externally Set and Marked	100% Open		60	Note: 40/45% Marks for spelling punctuation and grammar
English						YES – as below		
SLC*	2	3	3×10min	Externally set - Internally marked	100% Open		60	SLC* is 3 x 10min sessions within a 1 hour period with a minimum of 3 and maximum of 5 learners
Reading	2	3 Reading Texts	1 hour	Externally Set and Marked	>50% Open		30	
Writing	2	3	1 hour	Externally Set and Marked	100% Open		90	Note: 40/45% Marks for spelling punctuation and grammar

*SLC= Speaking, listening and communication



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